

Testimony for Charter Oak State College – Shahid Khokhar
Appropriations Committee – Public Hearing
February 13, 2009

Good evening- Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Shahid Khokhar, and I am a resident of Waterbury. I am honored to be here today to speak about the importance of the CT Wage Program for adults pursuing their degree.

I can still remember vividly, the cold and dry night of December 2, 2007 when I was laid off from my job at a Toyota dealership due to the lack of car sales. It became apparent to me that the economy was taking a plunge and that there were not many jobs available for individuals without a college degree. So, I found a part-time job just to make ends meet. One day, after glancing at my 5 and 7 year old boys and my wife, I knew I had to complete my Bachelor's degree so I could obtain a better paying job which would help fulfill the needs of my young family

Prior to my life taking these unexpected turns, I had completed 85% of my Bachelor's degree at SCSU, got married and eventually was distracted from the completion of my degree. Being laid off and with the need to make more money to support my family, I sought the means to complete my degree. This led me to Charter Oak State College where the supportive staff in the admissions office encouraged me to finish my degree.

However, the real issue of financing my education was still there. I was on the verge of losing my condominium, and was incurring more and more credit card debt. The motivation to finish my degree was already there, but the financial pressure was very strong. I was referred to Paula Silva in the Financial Aid office, who in turn referred me to Ms. **Delores Bell (Coordinator for CT Wage Program)**.

Miss Bell and the CT Wage Program was the last piece of the puzzle to the road to finish my Bachelor's degree. The peace of mind that came with the financial support from the program and personal support from Miss Bell, I was able to accelerate my studies by taking eleven classes within a seven month time frame. Not only did the support from the program enable me to finish my Bachelor's degree at a very fast pace but it also gave me the strength, support, and encouragement to finish my degree with a 3.80 GPA, which led to early admission into an MBA program at Southern CT State University.

To sum it all up, the effectiveness of the CT Wage Program can be judged from my situation: seven months ago, the thought of finishing my Bachelor's degree was fading away and my future was looking pretty bleak. Now I am enrolled in a MBA program with concentration in Finance at Southern CT State University. This program has enabled me to see the light at the other end of the tunnel.